#### ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

# I. ACF/West-Central Hub/Dallas Regional Office

#### II. Overview

The Administration for Children and Families, West-Central Hub, combining the operations of the Dallas (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas) and Denver (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming) regional offices, is responsible for over 60 programs that promote economic and social well-being of children, families, individuals and communities. Our services and interventions are directed toward improving job skills and access to social services. Additionally, services are directed to ensure family and community stability and independent living for low-income families, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities and distressed communities. The West-Central Hub provides leadership, funding and technical assistance to its partners including state, city, territorial and tribal governments and public, private and faith and community-based organizations. The West-Central Hub disseminates information on laws, regulations, program policy and procedures, and research and evaluation; promotes best practices; and strives to eliminate barriers to access of services and funding opportunities.

# III. Key Managers

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# IV. Key Programs and Initiatives

The Administration for Children and Families is responsible for twenty-two legislative programs. The Fiscal Year 2002 Strategic Plan combines these into fourteen major program areas. The West-Central Hub provides direct administration of ten of the fourteen programs and provides support and referral services in the remaining four program areas. The Hub plays a key role in implementing the agency's mission through collaborating, integrating and sharing resources across programs; enlisting the participation of program partners and stakeholders; building external coalitions and mutual support; and connecting directly with populations served.

### **Key Programs**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families was established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). This program includes a wide range of provisions designed to encourage and support efforts by states and Tribes to help transition individuals from welfare to work. These provisions include work requirements, required work activities, personal employability plans, child care support for families transitioning into jobs, health care coverage, job subsidies, a five-year time limit, performance bonuses, state maintenance of effort requirements and flexibility for states and Tribes in operating their programs. Flexibility under PRWORA extends to strengthening families and promoting responsibility including self-sufficiency and encouraging two-parent families, providing services to non-custodial parents to ensure that they are able to support their children and have the skills necessary to be better parents, teen pregnancy prevention and assisting teen parents. FY2002 services will be directed toward enhancing the effectiveness of welfare reform for low-income families through job retention, job advancement or professional development; expansion and improvement of health care, child care and other basic supports; and the promotion of strong families through healthy marriages, abstinence and responsible and dedicated parenting.

The West-Central Hub continues to work with Tribal governments to increase TANF services in Indian country with three Tribes within the lower portion of the Hub operating Tribal TANF programs – the Osage Nation, the Zuni Pueblo and the Navajo Nation. FY2002 activities will include delivery of training and technical assistance to existing tribal TANF programs; guidance and advice to Tribes preparing to file for Tribal TANF application; and promotion of effective state/Tribal partnership between Tribal TANF and state child support programs. The Hub with the Department and with ACF/Office of Family Assistance will work on the scheduled Tribal TANF Listening Session which is scheduled for the first quarter of FY2002 in Washington DC.

**Developmental Disabilities** enhances the ability of persons with developmental disabilities to live, work and play in their communities through supporting state, tribal and other programs that develop, coordinate and stimulate permanent improvement in service systems. Priority will be placed on those individuals whose needs are not otherwise met under other health, education and human services programs. Fiscal Year 2002 services will focus on working closely with states and other federal agencies to ensure full compliance with the Olmstead Decision and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as stated in Executive Order 13217. Activities will also focus on all aspects of the Administration's New Freedom Initiative to ensure community-based alternatives for individuals with disabilities.

**Refugee Resettlement** (RR) assists refugees and entrants who are admitted into the United States to become employed and self-sufficient as quickly as possible and provides grants to States and other grantees for employment-related services, social adjustment, transitional cash and medical assistance and other services (administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement). Hub activities are limited to information dissemination and referral services.

**Social Services Block Grant** (SSBG) supports a variety of social services tailored to supplement State investments in the self-sufficiency and well-being of low-income populations through State

Grants. SSBG funds also help improve and integrate services, create community-based partnerships, and stimulate innovations (administered by the Office of Community Services). FY2002 Hub activities include information dissemination regarding grant opportunities limited oversight of child welfare related grants and the promotion of increased use of TANF funding for SSBG activities.

Assets for Independence Demonstration Program establishes demonstration projects to determine the effects of providing an incentive to accumulate assets in individual development accounts to low-income individuals and families to increase their economic self-sufficiency. Also known as IDA, this demonstration program includes households whose income falls below 200% of the poverty income guidelines. FY2002 Hub services will include information dissemination activities and delivery of customized training and technical assistance to Texas in development and implementation of the their IDA project.

Child Support locates parents, establishes paternity and support obligations, and modifies and enforces those obligations to assure financial support is available to children. Additionally, the program funds comprehensive services for the whole family to ensure the well-being of the children. State and Tribal agencies provide direct administration of the program. FY2002 Hub activities will center around increasing distributed child support collections, sharing more collections with custodial parents leaving and remaining off welfare; and creating responsible fatherhood programs so that fathers can be effective parents and, perhaps, husbands. Additional Hub efforts will support reforming the financing of the child support program to make it more compatible with the current welfare system, strengthening the coordination of services, improving service quality, and building in a greater research and evaluation capacity.

All West-Central Hub Tribes, eligible to file for direct funding under the interim final rule, have been approved for direct funding (the first three programs in the nation) and are currently operating a Tribal Child Support program. The West-Central Hub continues to accelerate efforts to market and promote direct funding for Tribal Child Support programs in anticipation of the final rule. FY2002 activities will include providing leadership and guidance to ensure Tribal governments and organizations are able to explore and exercise options and opportunities to provide child support services for Native American families.

**Child Care** provides grants to States and Tribes to assist low-income working families who need child care that is safe, affordable and of high quality. Additionally, the program promotes healthy child development and comprehensive early childhood programs. FY2002 Hub services will

focus working with child care training and technical assistance contracts, QUILT and Head Start State Collaboration Projects on promoting creative and innovative programs which integrate the emotional and social development aspects of instruction with cognitive and school-readiness elements. Other activities include promotion of the "Early Reading First Program" in collaboration with the Department of Education and development of special projects with Youth Programs centered on before- and after-school care.

The West-Central Hub continues to work with Tribes and state child care agencies to increase affordable, quality child care by processing Tribal renewal plans and construction and renovation plans. Information dissemination activities include showcasing model strategies. FY2002 activities will include continued technical assistance on the Head Start/Child Care construction project.

**Head Start** is the Nation's largest early childhood education program. Its mission is to help low-income children begin school ready-to-learn by providing a range of comprehensive educational, child development, health and social services through grants to local public and private nonprofit agencies. To ensure local programs meet high standards every Head Start agency is monitored at least once every three years. FY2002 Hub activities will center on improving Head Start's early education services by setting high standards for early childhood education services and child outcomes; training teachers and managers; and establishing partnerships with State and national early literacy initiatives.

Child Welfare funds State and Tribal programs that assist at-risk children and their families in achieving safety, permanence, and well-being. This includes preventive intervention programs which strengthen the family unit; foster care and adoption assistance programs which move children more rapidly from foster care to safe, permanent homes; and reunification services to return the child to the home if in the child's best interest. Specific programs include Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Child Abuse and Neglect, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance (Incentives and Opportunities programs), Abandoned Infants Assistance and Independent Living. FY2002 Hub activities will focus on monitoring activities including Child and Family Services reviews in Oklahoma and Texas; at least one Title IV-E Eligibility review; the expected development and monitoring of Child and Family Service Review Program Improvement Plans in Arkansas and New Mexico; and the implementation and monitoring of Title IV-E waivers in New Mexico and Texas. Other activities will center on states' implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA); the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA); and full implementation of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP).

The West-Central Hub recently concluded processing of 50 Tribal Welfare FY2002 child welfare grant applications in an effort to build and strengthen services for Tribal children and families. FY2002 activities include providing training and technical assistance to tribal governments and organizations on child welfare policy and program development and ensuring tribal issues and concerns are reflected in upcoming Child and Family Services reviews. The Hub will continue to advocate strong government-to-government relationships between federal, state and tribal governments in the delivery of effective and comprehensive child welfare services.

Youth Programs support local agencies that provide shelter, improve life prospects, and reduce high risk behavior and sexual abuse of runaway, homeless and street youth, providing alternative activities, safe passages, and the tools needed to move successfully to adulthood. In FY2002 the major focus of Hub activities will center on disseminating best practices and building partnerships in all areas of positive youth development. This approach will encourage communities to provide the settings and services needed for the healthy growth and development of youth. The approach will also focus on assets rather than weaknesses in redirecting youth toward healthy pathways of development.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) supports an array of social services and programs through flexible funding at the state, tribal and local level to assist low-income individuals, including persons transitioning from welfare, the elderly, the homeless and migrants, to achieve individual and family self-sufficiency. Since 1996 CSBG has developed and implemented a Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) framework. This goal oriented framework holds local networks of community action agencies accountable in a standardized way yet allows flexibility in the development of processes and outcomes in keeping with local preferences and state objectives. FY2002 Hub activities will focus on improving outcomes for children and family well-being at State and local levels with emphasis on self-sufficiency and strengthening families by promoting healthy marriages, improving parenting skills and increasing the involvement of fathers in their children's lives.

**Domestic Violence Programs** support programs and projects to prevent family violence; provide immediate shelter and assistance for the victims of family violence and their dependents through grants for Battered Women's Shelters; and fund the Domestic Violence Hotline. This grant program encourages State, Tribes and local governments in implementing and maintaining projects to prevent family violence. Grants supplement established community-based family violence prevention and service activities; fund the Domestic Violence Resource Network; and fund the National Domestic Violence Hotline. The Office of Community Services administers these grants. FY2002 Hub activities will center on raising public awareness and disseminating information on prevention and intervention services. These efforts will be coordinated across ACF programs.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) assists low-income households in meeting the costs of heating and cooling their homes. States, Tribes and Insular areas, which provide assistance to low-income households with high-energy burdens and vulnerable members may apply for LIHEAP block grant funds. LIHEAP benefits include heating or cooling assistance; energy crisis interventions to cope with weather-related and supply-shortage home energy emergencies; low-cost residential weatherization and other energy-related home repairs to assist in safely increasing the efficiency of home energy consumption. The Office of Community Services administers this program. Hub activities are limited to referral services and general information dissemination activities regarding grant opportunities and announcements.

**Native American Programs** promote economic and social self-sufficiency of American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders by supporting programs and encouraging local strategies in economic and social development. The Administration for Native Americans provides grants, training and technical assistance to eligible Tribes and Native

American organizations to develop innovative Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) programs. The purpose of the SEDS program is to assist Native American leadership in exercising control over their resources; foster the development of stable, diversified local economics which provide jobs, promote economic well-being, and reduce dependency on social services; and support local access to and coordination of programs and services that safeguard the health and well-being of people and essential elements for a thriving and self-sufficient community. Hub activities are limited to referral services and general information dissemination activities regarding grant opportunities and announcements.

### **Key Initiatives**

The West-Central Hub serves as the Assistant Secretary's representative in support of national initiatives complementing the goals and objectives of our mission.

**TANF Reauthorization**: By October 1, 2002, FY2002 activities will address the reauthorization of 1996 welfare reform legislation by the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress. Governors, state legislators, tribal leaders, state/tribal public human services administrators will play a major role in the reauthorization process. Other players include local governments, business leaders, advocacy groups, service providers, think tanks, researchers and foundations. On November 15 (tentative) West-Central Hub governors, state legislators, county officials, welfare program directors and welfare recipients will join Assistant Secretary Wade F. Horn, Ph.D., at one of five scheduled national "listening and discussion sessions" in discussing ways to strengthen the TANF program.

New Freedom Initiative: Activities will include expanding educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities with a focus on early reading; integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce; ensuring full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and promoting full access to community life with full implementation of the Olmstead Decision. Related Hub initiatives include the Head Start (HS) Inclusion Initiation to increase enrollment of children with severe disabilities in Head Start programs; Special Quest Training Program designed to increase the number of infant and toddlers with significant disabilities enrolled in Early Head Start (EHS) programs; Head Start/Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) ADA Initiative, a three-year initiative to determine the accessibility of HS/EHS/RHY facilities as set forth in the ADA Act; and the Olmstead Collaboration Project, a collaborative effort with the Office of Civil Rights, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid and the Social Security Administration to assist West-Central Hub states in meeting the principles set forth in the Olmstead Decision and complying with the Americans for Disabilities Act.

Family Strengthening Initiative focuses on the creation and maintenance of healthy marriages and responsible fatherhood programs. According to research the family remains the most significant influence in children's lives and families are better served when there are two married parents. Where appropriate and continually employing cultural sensitivity, Hub activities will include the dissemination of information across ACF program lines on available services for the formation and maintenance of healthy marriages. Additionally, the responsible involvement of

fathers in their children's lives will be promoted across ACF programs, especially at the community level through Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Family Literacy Project: The Head Start Family Literacy Project is a cooperative agreement between the Head Start Bureau and the National Center for Family Literacy to provide integrated comprehensive family literacy services to help balance the requirements of welfare-to-work legislation with gaining literacy and job skills. Early Head Start and family literacy programs are based on the research that early intervention thorough high quality programs enhances children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development; enables parents to be better caregivers and teachers to their children; and helps parents meet their own goals, including economic independence. Hub activities include raising awareness of the goals and objectives of the project, reviewing training material, and coordinating training and technical assistance services for grantees.

**School Readiness Initiative**: This initiative supports strong cognitive development, including reasoning skills, social competence, and emotional health; teacher training models to better prepare children for academic success; and provides parents and other caregivers information and recommendations to ensure children are ready to enter school. Training models are built on sound research and support curricula rich in pre-reading and vocabulary skills. The West-Central Hub support the following projects:

The CIRCLE Project consists of twenty Head Start programs, which received \$15 million in Texas Education Agency grants intended to strengthen Head Start's capacity to foster children's pre-reading, language, numeracy and school-readiness skills. Over 7000 children and 500 teachers are being impacted by this two-year project, which began June 1, 2000. The Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE), at the University of Texas Health Science Center, Division of Pediatrics, in Houston, Texas, directed by Dr. Susan Landry, provides intensive staff development. A pilot project supported by the partnership efforts of CIRCLE, the Meadows Foundation, and the West-Central Hub/Dallas Office entered into a collaborative agreement facilitating the participation of an additional ten Head Start programs beginning in the summer of 2001. Each grantee has received \$25,000 directed toward early childhood emergent literacy and assessment.

The Library Partnership Agreement Project was developed to promote partnership agreements between Head Start and Early Start grantees and their local public libraries to assist Head Start and Early Head Start children to enter school ready to learn. The project promotes increased literacy opportunities for children and their families through the utilization of resources and services offered by local public libraries. This project is currently in the developmental stage to be rolled out in January 2002 Hub-wide.

Reading is Fundamental provides funding for center lending libraries, books to send home with children and four training sessions for parents. Region VI grantees were notified of the availability of end-of-the-year monies. End-of-the-year participation allows grantees to be automatically placed on a list for consideration of funding in Fiscal Year 2002.

Faith-Based and Community Initiatives: This initiative focuses on expanding the role in social services of faith-based and other community-based organizations, which have traditionally been distant from government. Hub activities include supporting the efforts of the Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives created by Executive Order 13198. To date Hub activities have centered on compiling an inventory of current ACF-funded faith-based programs including Charitable Choice programs. FY2002 activities will be directed to promoting a sensitivity to and openness toward both faith-based and community groups applying for social service grants; assessing and removing barriers in the grants application process and keeping with the intent of Charitable Choice, working diligently to inform faith and community-based organizations of their potential eligibility to funding, facilitating their application and providing effective technical assistance.

# V. Primary State and Tribal Agency Contacts

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Pueblo of Isleta

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Pueblo of Laguna

Harry D. Early, Governor

Gilbert Sanchez, Superintendent, Laguna Department of Education

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Ramon C. Garcia, Governor

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Taos Pueblo

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Rebecca Torres, Chief

Lead agency: Alabama/Quassarte Tribal Town

Tarpie Yargee, Second Chief

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Caddo Nation of Oklahoma LaRue Parker, Chairperson

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Central Tribes of the Shawnee Area, Inc.

Sac & Fox Nation (BIA)

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Cherokee Nation – 102-477 Grantee

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Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma

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Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma Ottowa Tribe of Oklahoma

Floyd E. Leonard, Chief

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Marshall R. Gover, President

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Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma

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